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ABSTRACT

Equality of opportunity, a very important component of the career education rationale, mandates that career education must apply uniformly to all. Many startling changes must be made in our educational, social, and economic systems; and career education is the central instrument for the voluntary renewal of education. The counselor's role in this reform movement is that of catalyst, harmonizer, and orchestrator. Minorities (poor, non-white, and to a certain extent, women) have lacked the luxury of choice afforded others; hence they must be made knowledgeable about various alternatives, including the kinds of financial assistance available. A recent poll of 900 inner-city students from three large cities indicated that virtually every student put college finance information in first and second place in rank ordering of informational needs. Kinship between what happens in the schools and what happens elsewhere is the heart of career education--and this practical application of knowledge should be the concern and responsibility of all teachers. Education should be saturated with the career theme. The counselor needs to put together the resources for career education. Career education is the profession's response to end the systematic injustices that threaten our society. (SC)

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CAREER EDUCATION AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY*

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As a school administrator for over 20 years, I, like you, have had ample opportunity to contemplate the successes of the American educational system as well as its failures. Curiously enough, I find our many virtues easier to recollect and pleasanter to contemplate than our failings. But you didn't come to San Diego for comforting assurances that all is well in education or the counseling profession, but to consider changes which we must undertake as a profession to better meet the evolving needs of the people. A letter I received recently seems typical of these concerns and especially topical for this gathering since it addresses a major concern of the guidance profession, how we can do a better job in the schools of preparing young people for personally fulfilling, socially useful careers.

The correspondent, a young Illinois matron, writes:

"I have just finished reading "Marland on Career Education" from the American Education journal and have found your ideas very provocative and intriguing.

One of the main problems I have had is finding a way to harness my potentials into a rewarding career,

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CE 000 063

mainly I think because I had never been exposed to the areas of career opportunities. Though I am a product of the Winnetka school system (and remember as a child your friendly, interested visits to my classroom on occasion) and Smith College, the fall from Horace and Catullus to a filling-time secretarial job while I try to decide what I want to do with myself gets a little too much for me at times. I was not prepared to accept my present status."

I must say that it is a little disconcerting to my youthful ego to have an Illinois matron remember me as the kindly gentleman who used to visit her classes when she was a child. However that may be, by any standard of justice, we must acknowledge that education has failed this woman. Because I was her superintendent in Winnetka, I must assume a share of the guilt.

And yet, despite failures of this kind, I believe we can find reason for encouragement in the fact that after decades of neglect, benign or otherwise, we are at last thinking seriously about people like this lady, those many who for varied reasons haven't been making out under the traditional scheme of things. And, in particular, we are now beginning to concern ourselves actively with the business of delivering a full measure of educational and occupational equality to those who have been systematically denied.

A few days ago, for example, I watched a televised interview with a 17-year-old Washington, D.C. high school senior

named Adrian Dunbley. He is black. He works at basketball six hours a day and many professional scouts are already interested in signing him after college. He said, "I have just decided that I intend to be a professional basketball player, and I am working at it. Some say that I am not very social. OK. You have to make sacrifices. I have made those sacrifices because I want to."

Score one for our side. What this boy was saying is career education. He is a young man who knows what he wants to do, and has thus taken firm hold of his destiny. Some wise counselor, or coach, or teacher in the D.C. schools helped Adrian harness his capacities and decide to build a career. Unfortunately, there are not many Adrians in this world, of any ethnic derivation, and we must work harder for the many who possess only a normal share of talent, drive, and ambition and whose path to career success will therefore be less obvious, to them or to us.

The old and worn and yet-to-be realized chiche --- equality of opportunity --- is thus a very important component of the career education rationale, inseparable from such objectives as personal fulfillment and economic productivity. To be acceptable to our society in terms of the newly won rights of minority citizens and their dawning ambitions, career education must apply uniformly to all --- whatever their color, sex, location, or economic status.

That was a rather uplifting thing to say, and yet what a Herculean task the word "uniform" implies. It means that we

must really turn things around as they now exist, accomplishing startling and perhaps, for some, unwelcome changes in the educational, social, and economic systems through which our people are processed on their way from childhood to adulthood.

For all of us, then, this is a time of trial, and I want to put a specific challenge before you today, for I view career education as the central instrument for the voluntary renewal of education at all levels.

As counselors, you are really at the heart of what might be the most significant reform movement in education since universal education became our watchword. I ask that you think hard about assuming that central role of orchestrating the many parts of education that must flow together if career education is to become a reality.

Clearly, vocational-technical education teachers know they have a high place in the reform movement. But they disown the prime mover role because they feel that preemption of career education leadership by them would be misinterpreted, would bring little gain, and might produce disaster. The classroom teachers, while paying serious attention to the message of career education, seem unready to take a grip on it in terms of their particular grade or curriculum field for lack of a system or a design. There are, however, exciting exceptions to this generalization.

The industry and labor community stand eagerly ready to share in this reform movement, yet they too are groping for

a way to enter. School administrators, including chief State school officers and superintendents, have broadly endorsed the concept yet they too need a catalytic force arching across all grade levels and all subject areas.

In sum, I know of no other force that will serve this purpose but the critical mass of concern, professional wisdom, human compassion, and technical skill possessed by those of you who make up the network of guidance counselors throughout our Nation.

I challenge you to think hard about a larger role than that now implicit in the term guidance counselor. For I would see you as the catalysts, the architects, the harmonizers, the orchestrators within the school systems you serve, reaching out for new ways to do the very things for which your professional commitments have always stood in a new and demanding task of creative leadership.

As guidance counselors you have enjoyed your greatest success with the children of the middle class, and usually the male children of the middle class. And why not? Traditionally they have been the best material to work with, good college prospects, possessing traits the majority defines as desirable --- white skin, economically secure parents, and perhaps respectable college board scores. They can best afford to try several career options, recognizing that if the first doesn't work out they have the time and resources to try another.

Our reward system has been upside down. You and I earn brownie points by getting the most promising students into the most prestigious colleges. The "best" of the counselors

earn their way up through their work with the "best" of the students. The novices, the untried, the inexperienced counselors generally start at the bottom with the bottom when it is obvious that the most talented and experienced counselor should work with the least promising and most disadvantaged.

The poor and the non-white and, to a certain extent, women, lack the luxury of choice afforded the bright, the favored, and the male --- in job entry or college entry. They are usually forced to settle early on a way to support themselves, and often to make their choice of a job or a college with limited if any counsel or in the face of prejudiced appraisals. Their job market options and their conditions for college entry are far narrower. It is not difficult for me to recall a stereotyped interview between a young lady and her male guidance counselor in Pittsburg in which formula advice such as the following was smilingly dispensed (with the best will in the world, misguided though it was): "Pretty girls are sure to get married. Therefore, they should put careers such as medicine out of their heads and try secretarial work for the time being." Unfortunately, for a growing percentage of women, the "time being" turns out to be a career stretching over a working lifetime. We can only guess at how often such fatuous advice has been accepted as "best," and how often as a result thoroughly reasonable aspirations have died aborning. It is not speculation but fact that the health professions among others today display an embarrassing shortage of women professionals.

Minorities tend to be particularly cynical about career education as it has been defined thus far. Their understandable suspicions have been brought on by years of frustration and denial. They fear that career education may be merely a fancy new name for a pernicious old practice --- training poor people for the cheap labor market, counseling blacks and browns to continue in the low-skilled work so stereotyped by their fathers' labors, tracking selected learners, usually from the barrios and ghettos, away from college and into the blue-collar ranks.

Career education has no such intent. Indeed, I hope you need no rhetoric from me to persuade you that the reverse is true. We do argue, however, that a college degree has no magic influence, is not necessary or even desirable for every student in the United States, and certainly will not lead infallibly to coupon-clipping and country club membership. Many crafts that can be learned in two-year postsecondary training lead to careers that are more secure, more available, and more satisfying and remunerative than those open to many college men and women, particularly graduates of academically popular but opportunity-lean fields. I am thinking of teaching for one, English for another, psychology, history, and so forth.

But before such arguments about college and noncollege options can be given a reasonable hearing by minority youngsters, they must be in the same position to weigh options as the more favored white, suburban, middle-class child. They must be made knowledgeable about their various alternatives, including

the kinds of financial assistance that are open to them. They must perceive career education as the opening of new doors, not the closing. But all our rhetoric and all our sincere good will leave many minority people still cynical. They have been put down too many times. Career education, therefore, while serving all learners, must by its intrinsic worth and demonstrated results earn the trust of the still suppressed 20 percent of our people. The best information we have at the moment indicates that a huge information gap exists, revealing that in this area of financial aid for postsecondary occupational development we are doing the least for those who need help the most.

Last spring the HEW Office of Youth and Student Affairs found out what inner-city students in three cities --- Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and Dallas --- were thinking about in connection with some major issues of the day. The purpose was to acquaint the Secretary with unvarnished student opinions on a whole range of controversial matters including education, health, narcotics, and welfare in order to stimulate productive change in departmental policy should it appear necessary.

It is necessary, believe me. I can't speak for the other agencies of HEW, but I can tell you that the results of this small poll are producing a serious self-examination and corrective action in the Office of Education. The information collected clearly reveals that we are not getting through to this particular kind of student in areas that have a great deal of importance for them.

About 900 students, most of them black, were polled. Forty eight percent listed among their top four priorities information on financial aid for college; another 46 percent rated the need for this information almost as high. Virtually every student, in other words, put college finance information in first or second place in his rank ordering of informational needs. Yet most knew almost nothing about existing programs of Federal assistance. A sad state of affairs considering that a major intent of the Nixon Administration higher education policy is to remove all strictly financial barriers to college attendance.

The FY '74 OE budget requests nearly a billion dollars, up over \$300 million from this year, for the new Basic Opportunity Grants program to bring this pledge to fulfillment, and I wonder whether the counseling professionals --- and, indeed, the total elementary and secondary classroom teaching community --- wholly comprehend the significance of this effort. For the first time in the world's history, a child in the early grades knows that college is absolutely within his means if he wishes it. The motivational implications in this phenomenon are yet to be unfolded, but I feel that they are very large --- for families, for children, and especially for us as teachers.

Program designs are being shaped now within the Department that we hope will breach this information barrier. We are going to promote far more explicitly and forcefully the availability of Federal aid for the aspiring college student, particularly those from disadvantaged homes. We are going to reach out to inner-city youth through every conceivable communi-

cations technique --- pamphlets, publications, press releases, radio and television, community contacts, inter-organizational cooperative efforts, speeches, and any other method that seems to recommend itself.

Yet however effectively and aggressively we use these instruments, I think we will have to concede that our best efforts will have at most a limited effect without your active involvement and professional cooperation as counselors at the heart of the system. And yet, in view of what we have learned about student ignorance of Federal aid programs, I am forced to ask myself just how well we in Washington are communicating with you.

Two hundred years ago, the Earl of Chesterfield observed that the knowledge of the world is only to be acquired in the world, not in a closet. In terms of career planning --- particularly for those students whose antecedents did not have anything that could, with dignity, be called a career --- I think education has been in a closet. To an alarming degree, we're still in the dark with the shoe boxes and the mothballs.

It is no longer workable for education to be in the world but not of it, and to be faintly contemptuous and "above" the squalid doings in the workaday marketplace of human performance. We must prepare our charges for that marketplace, not on its terms alone but on our jointly agreed terms, or concede that we are unable to complete a very large part of our total function. Schools are not museums of academic collections. Schools are vital places in which our young people must learn that which is

useful and practical for their total existences. And that includes learning about the many roles among which they must make sudden but fateful choices when they leave formal education. Preparing them to make that decision intelligently is our burden, our challenge, and our duty. It asks more of all educators at all levels, but it especially asks more of counselors.

Kinship between that which happens in the schools and that which happens everywhere else is the heart of career education. We know this notion offends educational purists who prefer to have learning undefiled, as they see it, by any mundane and practical applications of knowledge. And yet if knowledge is not practical, what is it? Not much, I declare. As predecessor of mine as Commissioner of Education, Sterling McMurrin, philosopher at the University of Utah, has observed:

"The Greeks made no distinction, as we do, between the fine and applied arts. Aristotle saw no difference in principle and worth between building a house and composing a poem, and we are under no sort of classical obligation to approach the meaning of education in a way that segments and distorts the seamless fabric of knowledge and experience."

Intimate relationship applies to educational administration as well. I believe, for example, that the growth of your strategic profession is excellent and in every way a healthy trend in American education. Yet, with your forgiveness, I would be far happier and our system of education would be far stronger if guidance were not your specialty alone but the general concern and responsibility of all who are professionally engaged in teaching.

Career education also needs the guidance talents of those who daily come in contact with our students --- their classroom teachers. At least a part of each curriculum at all levels should articulate academic learning with careers, and inform the boys and girls of the infinite career possibilities open to them. Education, in my view, must be permeated, saturated, with the career theme. A successful program of career education therefore requires specialized teaching and counseling by classroom teachers as well as by guidance personnel. We need your leadership as the orchestrators of this new force for learning, but we cannot overemphasize the concurrent need for total staff involvement.

Moreover, if we are serious about the career theme, we must bring to the classroom people who know what careers are all about. We need the insights and perceptions of men and women from business and industry who really know what it's like to work in a computer firm, a steel plant, a beauty parlor, a hospital, or a government office. Out of that highly relevant personal experience they can bring to the students accurate, up-to-date information not only on qualifications needed to enter a specific field of endeavor, but whether or not they should even consider it. I am familiar with the valuable and venerable Business-Industry-Education Day offered in most schools once a year. I ask for it every day. For too long men and women from the working world have been barred from our classrooms by antiquated certification constraints that burden the guidance and teaching professions. The need to reform our credentialing system is a discussion for another day, but it has

rich application to the idea of career education reform. For if you are to be orchestrators of the career theme, you need the live and human and willing resources of the labor and business community as much as you will need the English and math and music teachers. We have, in sum, reached the stage where career education must be carried beyond the theoretical and into the classrooms through widespread installation of new curriculums that are now emerging from federally sponsored research efforts and from the much larger experimentations and trials that are being carried forward at the local level under State leadership.

As I observed at the start of these remarks, it is clear that all activities of this kind will deeply involve, indeed, will largely depend upon, your energy and commitment. The burden, or at least much of it, is on your shoulders. You are the logical professional leaders to put together all our resources for career education.

I have said many times in the course of the last two years that career education must end the traditional separation between academic and vocational studies, a division which I believe causes an unproductive and even dangerous denial of equality within the house of education.

I believe that we can logically extend that sentiment and argue that career education is our profession's inescapable response to the expressed desire of the American people to end the systematic injustices that disfigure and threaten our society.

This issue is not limited to what a person learns in the classroom or earns on the job, as important as these things are.

Our ultimate issue is basically to see that all Americans can take their places in our society with an equal measure of human and civil rights, with useful knowledge and skills, and with a sense of personal worth which the learner has earned and which cannot be taken from him or her.

Career education is in the best sense a preparation for a full human existence, a goal that demands as a prior condition the complete and permanent removal of all unnatural and unfair impediments. If we in education willingly accept the rising expectations that this goal implies, then I would confidently say that the search for justice and equality that we have espoused for so long as educators in America may finally have found its real beginning.